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Mabel Adkins

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ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA  
400 Hal Greer Boulevard  
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2667  
304/696-6799

SUBJECT: Owens Class History Project

ORAL HISTORY NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

MORROW ACCESSION NUMBER: 509

ORAL HISTORY

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UNIVERSITY OF WEST VIRGINIA

OWENS GLASS HISTORY PROJECT

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: MABEL ADKINS

CONDUCTED BY: CHRISTIE KASPRZAK

DATE OF INTERVIEW: JUNE 22, 1994

Christie: Okay, today's date is June 22nd, 1994, and this interview is with Mabel Adkins for the Owens Glass History Project. When were, when were you born?

Mabel: September the 2nd, 1909.

Christie: And where were you born?

Mabel: Uh, Williamson, West Virginia.

Christie: Williamson? (unh-huh) Did you grow up there?

Mabel: Uh, 'til I was 14. We moved to Huntington. Fourteen years old. My mother remarried, and I had uh, there was six children in the family. So, we all moved to Huntington. He went to work here as an iron worker. So, so I just stayed here, and married here. And my husband died two years ago in September, and we were married for 60-, 66 years. (that's wonderful) Yeah. To the same man...that's unusual nowadays. Yeah. [laughter] So anyway, I went to work at Owens, I think, after we were married... a long time after we married in 1930. As easy...as far as I can remember it, it probably was 1933 or -4 (when you started working at Owens?) Unh-huh. Yeah. And I worked on the lahrs, packed bottles. And my first job that I worked on was gallon jugs, handling gal-taking those off the lahrs (unh-huh) that come through. You have to keep your project going, you know, they keep coming out and you've got to pick 'em off. Anyway, we had to pack 'em in wooden crates. And I, we had to stack our own ware half the time. Take 'em off, pack 'em, stack 'em on the, pack 'em, set 'em on the cart over to the side of you. And turn around and get another.

Christie: That was heavy work, then.

Mabel: Hard, heavy work. Very hard. And I think I went to work probably for 25 cents an hour. (wow) Never had a union all the time I was there. (oh, they didn't?) No. Never...never worked under a union. (wow) See, 'cause I quit...I quit after well, Darla, my daughter, was born after, while I was working there. And uh, so, I quit Owens in I guess, after that, some time after that. And anyway, I worked up to uh, for Lake Polan, Polan's up 30th Street East in the glass plant. Hand blown glass for about a year. And uh, but, anyway, you worked shift work over there. Eight hours. And a lot of the girls they'd come and ask you if you wanted to work a double shift; that meant 16 hours. Standing on your feet packing bottles. And I, actually I went to sleep one time standing (did you really?) packing bottles. It sounds impossible, but I did. (you were just exhausted?) Yes. And I'd lost sleep. Probably been out and didn't get caught up on my next days sleep. So we changed shifts, so, we worked eight hours. Every week we changed shifts. We worked what they call the graveyard shift. It's midnight 'til seven the next morning. And then the day shift is seven in the morning 'til three. Then three

to eleven was the best shift. But uh, I worked fourteen years doing the same thing. And worked for different bosses. I remember a couple of names, but most of 'em are dead now. Of course, it's been so long ago. (mmm-hmm) I know...Louie Pike and one thing I wanted to say.... The way they hired 'em back then was during...way back years ago when they hired people for Owens, what you did, you got, you got up of the morning early, and went over to Owens at the gate, sit at the gate, and waited and they come out, pick you out, if you want, if they wanted you to, gonna hire you. And Hugh Kramer hired me. He was the man that come to pick out the...my sister and I went over, and was there at seven; that's when the shift started. So, they hired me the first day I applied. Then the next day I talked 'em in to hiring her, 'cause she really needed the work worse than I did. 'Cause I was married and she wasn't. [laughing] So anyway, she worked there a good many years, too.

Christie: You and your sister work together then, for a long time?

Mabel: Well, we worked at Owens, yeah. But...different shifts, see, 'cause they, I think they put her on another shift than me. 'Cause we worked different eight hour shifts. Anyway, it was hard work, but after you got used to it, you know, you're young enough to take it, so it wasn't so bad.

Christie: So did you have other family members that worked there?

Mabel: No. No, I didn't...my family, unh-huh, my husband worked for Ball Brothers years ago. But that was when they were here. (oh) In a glass plant down in Westmoreland. But he, he never worked there. My, I believe my brother-in-law worked at Owens a little bit, Hassel Adkins. But that's the only family member. Well, I had another, I had a brother that went to work there and worked a time. But they couldn't take it. It was hot. See...the men worked back on what they call the hot end, making the bottles, you know. Back where all the fire tanks, the fire end, all that hot glass coming off. A lot of 'em would get so hot they'd have to come out and lay down on the concrete floor to cool off. A lot of times blister, the face would blister. (wow) Terrible.

Christie: So, did all the women work in the selecting?

Mabel: Uh...most of 'em. But, some of 'em worked in uh, making cartons, paper cartons, in the carton department. But the majority of 'em worked in the selection, on the lahrs.

Christie: How many women were on your shift?

Mabel: Well, I don't...every...I don't know how many...if we had all the tanks going, I can't remember how many tanks...that was the whole place, hot tanks and lahrs, the whole thing...I can't remember how many it would be. I mean...'cause it, when I worked

there, all of 'em, the lahrs were runnin', so that would mean clear the, the whole building full of women. I can't remember, but we had a big shift. Anyway, we had a, they had a credit union, which was good. And I uh, they just take your money out of your paycheck. I think we got paid every two weeks, I believe. Anyway, and I'd have so much taken out of my paycheck by the company, but I didn't see it...and put in a savings. So, when we bought, when I bought my first home, why, I drew, I had money in my account and paid down on my house. Four hundred and some dollars. First home. About thirty...I think I paid three thousand dollars for a great big 2-story house over on Adams Avenue. (that's incredible) Isn't that something? Just think...working that hard for a quarter an hour. (yeah) Well...I can take \$25 though, back then, and live on it for a week for groceries, pay rent and everything. And my husband worked [inaudible]...and I think he made \$25 a week. So, we kept his mother and dad's home a going and our home, separate home, during that time. Well, it was enjoyable. We had a lot of nice people we worked for. We all got along good. And the worse thing a lot of times, we'd get so busy, nobody to relieve you. If you got to eat, somebody had to take your place on the lahrs. And sometimes it'd be hard to get somebody to work you know, that maybe wasn't there. So it'd either ...they'd bring us some doughnuts and coffee, or something while we was working, eat standing up.

Christie: Now this, the Depression was in the '30's. How did that affect your work?

Mabel: Well, we were real busy. It was...we were lucky to be working...back then. Everybody was, see. (yeah) And that was good money for back then. We had, we lived good, but my husband was working and I was working. Of course, like I said, we kept his mother and dad. But uh...it went around, the money went around. By taking care of it. But everything was so much cheaper, see, all your groceries and utilities and it didn't take much to live.

Christie: Well, since you didn't have a union, did that cause problems? Did you have ....? (no) No?

Mabel: No, we didn't have problems at all (no). We got a long good and we knew our job to do our job, and everybody was congenial. We didn't have any problems at all. But uh, they told me some of the girls that worked there later, said when they uh, Owens first was talking about going out of business, but the new guys came in here, they was so dirty, treated 'em like dogs, the women. Worked 'em to death. And see, they didn't do us like that. We knew what we had to do, and we did it. But now, it's dog-eat-dog, isn't it? They don't care about ....the personal touch is no more in any jobs. (yeah) They really don't care.

Chrisitie: So you got along with the management? And the owners?

Mabel: Yeah, yeah, just fine. And if I didn't want...if they

asked me to work over, a double shift, if I didn't feel like doing it, I didn't have to do it, see. And they didn't press it. 'Cause all you had to do was say you wasn't able to stand on your feet for 16 hours it's a long time. (yeah) But it was like a big family back then. Everybody knew everyone. And on each shift, we all knew each other, and knew the bosses. And they were good to us, and of course, we packed bottles for 8 hours, but we had rubber mats to stand on. Otherwise, you'd be standing on concrete. So, I used to have quite a problem gettin' me a rubber mat sometimes. Some 'em didn't use 'em to stand on. Oh, law....

Christie: What kind of opportunities did you have to advance, to get any promotions or anything like that?

Mabel: There wasn't anything, except office work. (oh) Yeah. Few, very few girls...you know, worked in the office. And otherwise, it...uh, because each shift had a boss on each lahr, in other words. On my lahr I had a boss, and each lahr had different bosses. And they ran that lahr. And then they had an office staff.... And overhead that could go, the hallway going across the overhead over us, and they could look down and watch us work. And if we loafed, and didn't do our job, they could oversee it. But we didn't have any trouble.

Christie: You couldn't work your way up to being....(no)...no. You just had the one position, you always had to stay in that position. (yeah, one position)

Mabel: And like I say, just...pack glass or uh, work in the cartons, making cartons. And they had a restaurant. We had...buy our food at the restaurant, coffee and doughnuts and other things. And we, I think they give us about a half an hour to get our food and go in there and sit down and eat. For an 8-hour shift. And we got to go to the restroom once or twice during the 8 hours.

Christie: What about raises? Pay raises. Did you get those regularly?

Mabel: I don't remember getting very many pay raises. I don't really believe we did. See, we didn't have a union. And...I think I made a little more than that when I quit. But I can't remember how much. Uh...I don't think we did, see, no union, they didn't have to raise you. (yeah) I remember one time I was packin', I always wore a wrist watch. And I took my watch off and laid it down beside me where I was working on the board that run down the side. And threw it in the glass pit where they break the broken glass. Lost it. (oh, no) [laughing] I always remember losing my watch.

Christie: So, did you make some good friends there?

Mabel: Mmm-hmm. Yes. I knew a lot of different people. And the



Christie: So, did the war change anything at the plant? Did women...were there more women working there, because of the war?

Mabel: I guess so. But see, Owens made a lot of whiskey bottles uh, I guess they made beer bottles, too. Medicine bottles. So, work was good then. So, Owens was running full blast. Every lahr and three shifts a day. And...around the clock. So, but now, for some reason, I quit right after that, and Lake uh, Polan's put this, had this plant up 36th Street East and that was hand-blown glass. They had a contract with the government, I think, to make coffee pots and something else...I don't know. Oh, tubes and things for uh, some of the ships. And so, of course, with my experience working at Owens, I worked about a year up there. They made a lot of money, Polan did, during that war.

Christie: So you last worked at the plant somewhere in the middle '40's? (who, me?) Mmm-hmm. (yeah) Somewhere in the mid-'40's. (un-huh, yeah) Did the plant like have company sponsored activities?

Mabel: Oh, yeah, we had a club house across from Owens, was a club house there. And we had uh, that was for the employees, dances and different things, and activities. And uh, I know I've been to several dances when we worked there. I mean, they always had something going on. At the club house. In fact, my bowling leagues, we used to have 'em down there. Some of the best banquets they ever had was there. (really?) Yeah, they had a good chef that did our food; delicious. And it was such a big room, 'cause they'd have the dances and things every year, and activities.

Chrisitie: Did you keep in touch with your friends after you left the plant?

Mabel: Yeah, several of them, un-huh. Yeah. Yeah, I used to run into 'em, you know, different times. And one of the fellows I run into up the street, and he said, "Mable, why don't you come back to work?" He said, "They're making good money now." Of course, the union had come in. I said, "No, I'm not gonna work anymore."

Christie: So the union...when did the union come in, do you know?

Mabel: Well, now, didn't the union start in ....let's see...must have been the 1940's. I was thinking 1936, but it wasn't. I said, Nila...Nila, my daughter was here, she was born in 1936. I don't think the union was in then. Must have been right after that. Close to (right after you left, you think, in the '40's?).... Yeah, yeah.

Christie: What kind of changes...I guess that changed a lot of things.

Mabel: Oh, yeah, a salary and everything, see. Well, you know, it



families. I remember the, a Bill Chess was one of my bosses. And I used to go to his home, he lived over here on Jefferson Avenue. And him and his family...and he was a good old guy, big rough lookin' fellow, just as nice as he could be. And I know one time, I guess my husband and a bunch of them, killed some squirrels and rabbits. We went over to Bill Chess's house, and his wife baked nine rabbits in the oven with a great big roaster, and we all had a big piece (wow, yeah). Yeah, we had a good time. They used to call Owens "Little Hollywood" over there, because a lot of courtin' going on, you know, different like different people, men and women thrown together like they do in other jobs. But...we never had no trouble.

Christie: So you were still working during World War II, right?

Mabel: I was working for Polan in World War II. I quit Owens I think...I know I...I was working at Owens when I went to Florida with another couple...1941. That's when 2nd World War started (right). We took a trip down to Florida and back. And...but I remember that, I was still working at Owens then. And this friend of mine had a camera, and of course, the war had just started. And she was out on the beach with, stayed at a motel right there on the beach, and she's gonna take pictures, and they stopped her from taking pictures of the ships and things out there. (really?) Yeah. 'Cause that's when the, it just started, and they didn't know what was gonna happen. (ohhh)

Christie: So, they were all like battleships.

Mabel: Yeah, that's what she was doing, taking pictures clear out of the battleships. Of course, that's right on the shore of Florida (right) coastline, see.

Christie: So how did the war affect your life? Or working...?

Mabel: Well, it really didn't. It didn't. I remember as if it was yesterday, though, when that war started. (really?) It was December the 7th, 1941. I remember hearing it. I guess on the radio. I don't know whether we had t.v. then or not. Did we? (I don't know) [laughter] I don't think we did back then. But that's, I remember....

Christie: You remember about the bombing on the radio? (yeah, yeah) Did you have any family that went to war?

Mabel: No, I, I was lucky. My uh, nephew, he didn't go to war, though. He was in the service. My husband's nephew. But no, they, really my husband was called up one of the first ones, I think, and his boss got him out of it. And so, he never went. None of my family ever went to war. You know. So, we were lucky that way. (yeah, really) But my brothers, I had three brothers, they were up too old to be drafted, I think.

went up from 25 cents an hour. [laughing] Unions did change everything, I'm telling you. But the only trouble with unions back then, when the unions went in, buddy, you had to produce more. That's what they were good for. Of course, there's nothing you can do. You had to keep your work up...any time you work at a factory like that. But that's one of the worst things I think that's ever happened to Huntington is when they moved Owens, closed Owens down. (yeah) See, look how many years, I think, it was .... Bolts back years ago. Bolt Glass....

Christie: Was it bolt when you worked for it?

Mabel: No. No, they'd changed. But they used that name a whole lot back then. But...but right away, it went from Bolt to Owens they changed it. And that must have been 1930-something. But....

Christie: How many children did you have?

Mabel: I just had the one daughter. (one daughter) Un-huh. I had a son that's dead...would have been older than her. He was close to five when he died. The croup.

Christie: So, was it hard to work and raise children at the same time?

Mabel: No, my...we lived with his mother and dad, my husband and I did, for years. Uh, so she kept Nila when she was little (ohh), and then when I moved out...we moved out, why, I always had baby sitters, girls that worked for...I had several girls from up at the country, up at East Lynn in Wayne County, to come and live with me...look after her. So, I was lucky back....

Christie: Yeah, the shift work must have been, made your schedule very odd.

Mabel: Mmm-hmm, oh, yes, yes, it did. See, when you work like we was talking about the midnight shift, graveyard shifts, that's from 11 to 7 the next morning, well, you have to come...see, it changes your whole system. Your eating habits, your stomach, your sleeping habits, everything. So, you have to sleep in the daytime, when you work nights, all night. So...and I left like I said, when I bought my first home, I lived over on Adams and [laughs]...they had a plant next to us there. And they run machinery or something, and you know, it's amazing, I never was much of a sound sleeper, but I learned to sleep in the daytime with that thing just a going, buzzin'. And everybody wanted to know about it. And I said, "Well, you just get accustomed to it, I guess." (yeah) Why, I was tired...you know.... [laughs]

Christie: So what did your husband think about you working?

Mabel: Well, he didn't care. 'Cause see, we were doing good back

you know, a lot of people were out of work. We went through The Depression, everybody did, but we did...got a long good after we all went to work. My husband had a brother, he, he worked, too, see. I think he worked at Owens some. But we did alright. But when my little boy was born that died, uh, that was back during the Depression. And I think we went for a year maybe, without any jobs or anything around the house. And so, my husband got a job...well, hello. [speaking to someone walking in the room] That's my great-grandson (well, hello) .... You come to stay with us? [grandson talking] They stay all night with us, Fridays, (ohh) there's two of 'em, twins. [Mabel talking to grandsons]

Christie: I won't take too much more of your time, so you can go play with your grandchildren. [laughter] (okay) So you said there were jobs that women weren't allowed to have at the plant, when you first started, is that right?

Mabel: Well, there wasn't any jobs for women except office work. Or (in selecting), un-huh, in selecting's about the only thing you could do.

Christie: That didn't change at all when you were there? (un-uh, no) Did, did women get paid the same amount as the men?

Mabel: No, no. (no?) Un-uh, no. I can't remember what the men were paid. I think they got more than that; I'm sure of it. Yeah, I'm sure it was a big difference. But I can't remember it. Well, it, see, back there, like I said, everything was much cheaper. Money went a long way, you know....

Christie: Did you get along with the men that you worked with?

Mabel: Yeah. They were just overseers, the boss, on each lahr see. On each shift they had bosses. And they were all nice, just family men. And very congenial. Didn't have any trouble with them.

Christie: Were there people of different races at the plant?

Mabel: No, not really. I don't even remember a black person at the plant. I really don't. I don't think we had none, back then.

Christie: There was segregation in Huntington, in the whole town.

Mabel: Yeah, but not noticeable in some places. I can't ever remember...[pause]...

Christie: Did you know any black people?

Mabel: Oh, yeah, sure. There was black people in the neighborhood. Uh...in my neighborhood, that were very nice, and we got along real good. And no trouble. And...they were just like

one of us. Had a black family that lived right close to us. And I know my stepdad, he used to, he'd get his payday and he loved children anyway, he'd gather all the kids up, and come with his pay, give everyone of them money, blacks and the rest of 'em. But they all got along good.

Christie: But the plant didn't hire any blacks?

Mabel: No. I don't really remember. I can't remember a one. We could have had some janitors or something, but I swear I can't remember. Unless I've forgotten. Quite different. Things have changed so much. (yeah)

Christie: Were all the people in your department in the selecting, were they all women? Or were there men who was selectors?

Mabel: No, women. (they were all women?) All women selectors, un-huh. Yeah.

Christie: I see. And all the management was all men?

Mabel: The men...the men bosses and then the men on the hot end, we'd call the hot end back...that made the, took care of the glass bottles, you know (right), back there. But that's all the men.

Christie: How did they...how did they decide uhm, you said you would go there in the morning, at seven in the morning, and they would pick who they wanted to work there.

Mabel: Oh, when they hired? That's the way they hired. Yeah, that's the way they hired.

Christie: You'd turn in your application?

Mabel: They'd come out to the gate, and hire you. And...I don't know where...I guess we went to work the next day. I remember who hired me, Hugh Kramer. He used to live over there.

Christie: So, they just came out and picked you out of a line?

Mabel: Yeah, out of a crowd. That's the way you got a job. Everybody did. Men and women, when they wanted a job. That's the way we had to do it.

Christie: What were they looking for?

Mabel: Good workers.

Christie: But how did they pick one person and not another?

Mabel: They just looked at you and picked you. [laughing] Just decided you'd be a good worker, I guess.

Christie: That nothing, they didn't really know anything about you....

Mabel: No, not a thing. You had to sign up of course, after you got off. But no, they just hired. 'Cause they knew you wouldn't be out there unless you wanted to work, (right), see. Every job back years ago, that's the way it was done. 'Cause I worked up town in stores, in Huntington, underwear. And different places, and that's the way people were hired back then. Yeah. (mmmh) Unless somebody you know, unless you knew somebody, it would help you get on. But that's...

Christie: Like you helped your sister get on.

Mabel: Yeah. Yeah, because she needed a job real bad. They were hard up and desperate. No money coming in, you know, families .... [inaudible]. I tell you, you young people don't know what it is to go through it. (no) Like we went through. And it was rough.

Christie: What was the Depression like? What can you remember?

Mabel: Well uh, they, you got let' see...they gave food out, so much baskets of food, for different families, according to your needs. And uh, and I don't know, things were limited like bacon, sliced bacon. You were only allowed so much, and sugar so much, each family. I know Dell's mother, my husband's mother and father, used twice the sugar that I use. I never was much to, I wasn't baking anything. Or using a lot of sugar. They used sugar on everything. So, the sugar was rationed. Everything was rationed. So, I know I'd give them sugar I don't know how many times I give 'em my sugar. Part of the time because I didn't use it.

Christie: Where did you pick up the groceries?

Mabel: I can't remember...where they....you mean the free groceries? (mmm-hmm) I can't remember now where they picked them up. I guess it, well, the grocery store was.... But I can't remember. I remember receiving 'em. I know we split with my mother and dad, some of the groceries, 'cause my stepdad was out of work, too, and they were hard up. And people just divided; that's what they did. You were allowed so much. And if you couldn't use it all, then you just divided it with somebody else. You know. (share) Share, that's what they did. Yes, they sure did.

Christie: I wonder why the plant was doing so well when the rest of the country was in this major depression.

Mabel: Well, there was a big demand for...for medicine bottles, uh, beer bottles, and uh, people canned then, canning uh...cans, jars, and all that. A lot of that was summer. You know, shipped out in the summertime. See, they cut all that. People don't can like they used to. (right) So, they had plenty, there was plenty



of work back then...in the glass business. There wasn't no shortage in that. Then seemed when the war started they used a lot of glass in the submarines and different things. That's what Polan was doing, making stuff for the submarines.

Christie: You said your sister was really desperate for a job.

Mabel: Oh, yeah, yeah, she was I guess, separated from her husband at that time. And she had a child. And my stepdad was out of work. And they didn't have any food or anything. No money coming in. I tell you...it's an awful feeling; bad feeling.

Christie: She must have felt pretty lucky to get a job.

Mabel: Yeah, yeah, she was. Well, we all were back then.

Christie: Did you work a lot of double shifts?

Mabel: No, I didn't work no double shift. I wouldn't do it. It's too much. (it's a long time) Sixteen hours on your feet I just wouldn't do it. They used to get mad at me, but I...I...they couldn't make me work. There wasn't...you could leave. You couldn't be made to work sixteen hours.

Christie: Your husband had a good job, so you, you all were doing pretty well.

Mabel: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah. See, we had another glass plant down here in the west end, he was working there, him and his brother. And so they closed that up and moved it out of town. And he had to get another job, which I think a brick driver or something, a... [someone talking to Ms. Adkins]

Christie: So are any of your friends from the plant still around here? (no) No?

Mabel: No, I don't know of any 'em now that's.... There are some that's still living, but very few. Most of 'em are dead. Most of 'em. I think there's some maybe still living out Harveytown, but.... I don't know but one of 'em that I used to buddy with, they all died. I'm 84 years old myself (yeah). I've been down here, around here a long time myself. [laughing]

Christie: You've seen a lot of changes come and go.

Mabel: Yes, Lord, yes. I sure do. Lots and lots of changes.

Christie: Did anything change at the plant while you were there? Or was it the same?

Mabel: It was more or less the same. There was several uh, seemed like people changed a little bit. Their ideas or something. But



our work schedule was just about the same. But uh, I can't remember too many changes. 'Cause it was just steady, over and over. Just a repeat business.

Christie: Did they get any automation in the plant while you were there?

Mabel: Yeah, some.

Christie: Well, was there anything you wanted to talk about? Any experiences that you remember that were very important to you?

Mabel: Well...no, not really. I can't you know, it's hard to remember back that many years. [laughing] But I know I had a good life, I'd say. Worked hard but lived a long time and enjoyed it. And had a good family and good friends. There used to be several people belonged to the church where I do, several of them worked at Owens. And then I bowled, and some of our bowlers worked at Owens, you know. And I know a few of 'em still bowl. They worked at Owens when I did. Like a girl down in Westmoreland, Marge Tomblin, she's a friend of mine, and worked at Owens years ago. And I think there's a lady that bowls in Senior Citizens Bowling League.

I believe she's pretty close to 90 years old (wow), that worked at Owens. So that's the only two that I, personally that I know that is still living. You know. I'm just sorry I can't remember a lot of other things, I know.... I just can't do it.

Christie: That's alright. That's quite alright. Everything you've talked about is very interesting. Things sure were different back in the '30's and '40's than they were here in the '80's and '90's.

Mabel: Yes, indeed. They certainly was.

Christie: Did you get any benefits when you left the plant?

Mabel: No, I don't believe so. Unh-huh, I didn't get anything. Like I said, the only money I remember is that money I had in the, the savings account over there (is that the Credit Union?) the credit union. I don't think I did. I don't remember.

Christie: Did you have to sign any kind of contract, or did you just go and they paid you hourly?

Mabel: No, no, just paid you hourly. When you sign up to work, and they depend on you coming out to work.

Christie: But they could fire you at any minute that they wanted. Did they do that a lot? Just...?

Mabel: No, I never heard of anybody being fired. (no) I really

never. (wow) No, sir, I can say that. I can't remember a person being fired. I've heard of people quitting, you know. For different reasons. But so far as being fired, I can't remember ever, anyone ever being fired. Nobody I knew was ever fired. (wow) That's unusual now, isn't it?

Christie: They found a lot of hard workers, I guess.

Mabel: Yes. Well, yes. They's glad for the money, and the jobs. And they appreciated 'em. They appreciated having a job and they were good to 'em. They worked hard, but they uh, enjoyed the benefits of that. And they were more or less like families back years ago, when people were, you know, just like a big family. Like you know most of the people around, especially in your shift you're working. Then when you work different shifts, you meet different ones, and get to know them. So it's just like a family affair. And very congenial.

Christie: Did it affect your home life at all? Uh...like did the plant ever tell you there was certain things that you couldn't do? (no) No.

Mabel: No, see, my son that died, when he died, I know my boss come to the fellow that hired me, Hugh Kramer, he come to the house and the funeral home, and several of them, to see him. He was a cute little 'ole boy, five years old. [inaudible].... Well, about their size. Died with croup. It just got worse and worse, you know. Kids'd get sick back years ago, get sick and you don't know how sick they are, 'cause there wasn't no shots and things like that. You know, medicine...there wasn't none. We had a doctor lived across the street from us where I lived down in Westmoreland. And by the time we called him and got him over there, it was too late. 'Cause it went into pneumonia, see. (there was nothing they could do) Unh-huh, no, there really wasn't.

Christie: What happened at the plant when you wanted to take time off to have a baby?

Mabel: Well, I don't know. I just took time off. I don't....

Christie: How much time did you take? Do you remember?

Mabel: Seemed to me like it was around two weeks.

Christie: And then they let, just let you come back? (uh-huh, yeah) To your regular job?

Mabel: Yeah. But I don't think I come back 'til Bobby was pretty good size boy. Well, I could come back when I wanted to, see. My job was always there. (it was?) Yeah. Yeah. But like I say, my mother-in-law kept him, we lived with his mother and dad, so I was lucky. I could go back, but I don't remember going back 'til he

was way up several years. I don't think I did. [someone sneezes] I do a lot of sneezin'. (it's the allergy season for me) Yeah. Donna has a lot of it.

Christie: Well, that's about all the questions I have. Uh...unless you wanted to talk about anything else.

Mabel: No, I can't think of anything. But I know it was a great loss to Huntington when they lost the Owens plant here.

Christie: Did you know people who were still working there?

Mabel: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yes, I did.

END OF SIDE 1

Mabel: I believe it was some kind of a boss. I can't remember, credit union or something, so. Then one of the boys, I think their sons, one of 'em, went to work there and got laid off, yeah. So, he's now without a job. It affects...it affected a lot of people. It really did. That's a big loss to Huntington. (yeah) That tremendous amount of tax money and all that. Seems like a ghost town, isn't it? (sure is)

Christie: Got that big empty factory sitting over there. (yeah) Did they ever lay people off in the earlier years, when you were there?

Mabel: Well, yes, when the tanks went down, some of 'em...see...when the orders run out, just like anything else, why, they had to lay some off. And maybe for a week or 2 weeks, or something. And then I guess they went back. But I never did get laid off.

Christie: Just when the business got slower...(yeah)...they laid people off. (uh-huh)

Mabel: Yeah, see, when they went to plastic and all that, and eliminated bottled glass, see, they quit making glass, ruined the business for one thing. (yeah) And cans, you know, pop and all that went to beer cans, instead of bottles (mmm-hmm). Well, that just practically ruined it.

Christie: How many people worked at the plant when you were there?

Mabel: Gosh...a lot of people worked there. I can't remember how many lahrs they had up. At least 12...lahrs...uh, I don't know. Six or seven hundred people or more. A big, a big job. I think they employed more people than the Nickel plant. Owens and Nickel, two plants, oldest plants in Huntington. And...I think it was six hundred and some people, wasn't it? When they closed this time? (mmm-hmm) Six hundred something, wasn't it? (right around there)

Yeah.

Christie: I was just wondering how many people in Huntington worked at the plant. I mean, it must have been a big employer for the town.

Mabel: It was, it was, one of the biggest. It surely was.

Christie: The town must have been much smaller then, though. Was it? (smaller?) The town was much smaller then?

Mabel: Well, yes, it would be some smaller. But...but it was a big employer.

Christie: Okay. Well, thank you very much. (well, it's alright)

END OF INTERVIEW